

## Sexual Health

at the Wolverton 020 8974 9331

Kingston upon Thames, Surrey (South West London)

Kingston Hospital   
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## Genital warts

### Genital warts in heterosexual men

#### What are genital warts?

- Genital warts are the most common sexually transmitted infection affecting men and women.
- Warts are caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).
- There are more than 40 types of HPV that can infect the genital area but **genital warts** are caused by just 2 types – HPV 6 and 11.
- Warts typically appear on the foreskin, penis and sometimes around the anus.
- Most of the time the body's immune system will clear HPV naturally within 2 years.
- If you have genital warts we recommend that you should have a full STI screen including a HIV test.

#### How common are warts?

- Genital warts are very common.
- They mainly occur in young men aged 20 to 25 years.
- A large number of people carry [genital HPV](#) infection without ever developing warts.

#### How do you catch genital warts?

- HPV is passed on through genital contact during:
  - Vaginal, anal or oral sex
  - sometimes just close genital contact without penetration
  - sharing sex toys with someone who has HPV
- HPV infection may lead to the appearance of genital warts after a time interval of 2 – 3 months, but this can be sometimes be much longer.
- Common warts that occur on hands and fingers are caused by a different type of HPV and are very unlikely to be passed to the genital area.

#### What would I notice if I had genital warts?

- Genital warts vary in appearance:
  - Single or groups of bumps
  - Smooth flat papules or raised and cauliflower like
  - Soft or gritty hard lumps
- In men warts are commonly found:
  - on the penis – usually on the head or foreskin, sometimes along the side of the penis
  - around the anus
  - occasionally on the lip or inside the mouth
- Warts sometimes cause itching or discomfort.

#### How do I get tested for genital warts?

- Genital warts are diagnosed visually during a genital examination.
- There is no specific test for HPV in the genital area.

### How are warts treated?

- Warts will often clear up without any treatment.
- Treatments are provided mainly for cosmetic reasons to remove the wart - there is no treatment for the virus itself.
- Treatment will depend on the appearance, location and number of warts you have and may include one or more of the following:
  - Clinic treatment
    - Cryotherapy (freezing)
    - Podophyllotoxin liquid
    - Home treatment with a self-applied cream
      - Podophyllotoxin (Warticon)
      - Imiquimod (Aldara)
- Treatments are usually applied several times a week. It takes on average 4 weeks for the warts to go.
- All treatments from the Wolverton are free and are given to you directly in the clinic.

### What about my partner?

- Warts are infectious and you can easily pass the HPV infection onto your sexual partner.
- About two thirds of sexual partners are found to have warts.
- We recommend that your sexual partner attends the clinic for a check up and STI screen.

### What problems can untreated warts lead to?

- Warts themselves are relatively harmless. If left untreated they may go away, remain unchanged or increase in size or number.
- Warts will not turn into cancer.

### Will warts come back again after treatment?

- Warts may recur in up to one quarter of individuals within the first month but this becomes less likely as time passes.
- Warts are more likely to recur or persist if you:
  - smoke
  - your immune system (defence system) is lowered:
    - by immunosuppressive drugs
      - used after organ transplantation
      - to treat cancers
      - to treat severe arthritis, [inflammatory bowel disease](#)
      - certain medical conditions
      - HIV
- It is unlikely that you will be re-infected again as your body will have developed immunity from your first infection.

### HPV vaccines

Unfortunately, the NHS (including the Wolverton Centre) does NOT offer either HPV vaccine at this time, to men or women. However, these vaccinations are available via private healthcare providers <http://www.privatehealth.co.uk/>

In the UK two vaccines against HPV are licensed. These vaccines can protect against catching HPV and are most effective if administered before a person becomes sexually active. Neither vaccine is available under a NHS prescription to men.

- Cervarix
  - In the UK this vaccine is given as part of an immunisation programme to teenage girls to protect them against [cervical cancer](#).
  - It works by stimulating immunity against certain types of HPV that are linked to cervical cancer (HPV 16 and 18).
  - It will not provide protection against genital warts - as they are caused by a different type of HPV (HPV 6 and 11).
- Gardasil
  - This vaccine provides protection against cervical cancer and genital warts (HPV 6,11,16 and 18).
  - It is not routinely used in the UK and can only be prescribed privately.
  - There is no benefit from it if you have already had genital warts.

### More information

[www.bashh.org](http://www.bashh.org)

[http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/genital\\_warts/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/genital_warts/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

<http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1191942128>

## Opening times for advice and to book an appointment:

Monday, Tuesday & Thursday 8.30am - 6.00pm



Wednesday 8.30am - 8.00pm  
Friday 8.30am - 1.30pm

[For clinic times please select here](#)